

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

S E C R E T STATE 223116

EXDIS DISTRIBUTE AS NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT NICOSIA 2674 ACTION SECSTATE 06 SEP 76

QUOTE S E C R E T NICOSIA 2674

NODIS

FROM HOUGHTON AND MACK

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR LE

SUBJECT: MEETING WITH KARIM PAKRADOUNI

REF: STATE 215513

1. KARIM PAKRADOUNI VISITED MACK AT OUR HOTEL ON SEPTEMBER 4. OVER DRINKS MACK CAREFULLY REVIEWED OUR TALKING POINTS TO MAKE SURE THAT PAKRADOUNI, AS A MEMBER OF THE PHALANGE POLITBURO AND THEIR "INTELLECTURAL", UNDERSTOOD NUANCES WHICH WE WERE FAIRLY SURE PIERRE GEMAYEL HAD MISSED (CONVERSATION REPORTED SEPTTEL). PAKRADOUNI STATED THAT, DESPITE HIS VERY NEGATIVE COMMENTS TO THE PRESS, SHEIKH PIERRE HAD BEEN PLEASED BY OUR PRESENTATION.

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2. PAKRADOUNI'S RESPONSE TO OUR TALKING POINTS WAS ALONG

THE FOLLOWING LINES: (A) HE BELIEVES THAT THE PRESENT SITUATION OFFERS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR A NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT. (B) THE POSSIBLE DANGERS TO THE CHRISTIANS POSITION ARE REAL; THE PRESENT, RELATIVELY FAVORABLE EQUILIBRIUM OF FORCES MAY WELL TURN AGAINST THE CHRISTIANS. (C) IN FEBRUARY KAMAL JUMBLAT LOST HIS CHANCE TO GAIN A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT WHICH, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES WHICH PREVAILED AT THE TIME, WOULD HAVE BEEN FAVORABLE TO THE LEFTISTS. (D) PAKRADOUNI DOES NOT WANT THE MARONITES TO MISS A SIMILAR OPPORTUNITY. (E) THE USG CAN PLAY A USEFUL ROLE BY EXPANDING CONTACTS WITH SYRIA, THEREBY LESSENING THE SUSPICIONS WHICH THE SYRIANS STILL ENTERTAIN ABOUT US INTENTIONS AND PROVIDING SYRIA WITH SUPPORT AGAINST SOVIET PRESSURE. (F) SARKIS WOULD BE ABLE TO PLAY A KEY ROLE IN ACHIEVING THE SETTLEMENT, AND HE HAD THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE PHALANGE. (G) SOME CHRISTIAN LEADERS (CHAMOUN AND FRANGIEH?) DO NOT WANT A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. (H) THE BIG PROBLEM IN DEALING WITH THE PALESTINIANS (ONE OF PAKRADOUNI'S FUNCTIONS) IS THAT THE MODERATES ARE STRUGGLING FOR CONTROL OF FATAH AND CANNOT SPEAK WITH AUTHORITY FOR THAT ORGANIZATION, LET ALONE THE REST OF THE PALESTINIAN MOVEMENT. PAKRADOUNI BELIEVES THAT MEANINGFUL NEGOTIATIONS WOULD STRENGTHEN THE MODERATES' HAND.

3. COMMENT:

WE HAVE BEEN TOLD THAT PAKRADOUNI, DESPITE HIS SEEMINGLY OBJECTIVE AND ANALYTICAL APPROACH, IS THOROUGHLY COMMITTED TO THE SYRIAN ALLIANCE. OTHER PHALANGISTS ARE NOT, AND THE ISSUE OF WHETHER SYRIA CAN BE TRUSTED IS APPARENTLY UNSETTLED, DESPITE SHEIKH PIERRE'S STRONGLY FAVORABLE BUT HIGHLY PERSONAL REACTION TO PRESIDENT ASAD. IF SO, PAKRADOUNI'S VIEWS MAY BE MORE IMPORTANT AS A GUIDE TO SYRIAN THINKING (PAKRADOUNI EXPRESSES PERSONAL PRIDE IN HIS "FREQUENT CONTACTS" WITH ASAD, KHADDAM AND OTHER SYRIAN LEADERS) THAN AS A REFLECTION OF PHALANGIST POLICY.

4. PAKRADOUNI ALSO TOLD MACK, AND WE LATER CONFIRMED FROM ANOTHER SOURCE, THAT PHALANGIST NEGOTIATORS HAD
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INITIALED WITH FATAH'S ABU HASSAN ON SEPT 4 AN AGREEMENT TO OPEN THE ROAD FROM BEIRUT TO THE PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AT BAADBA PRIOR TO THE ASSUMPTION OF AUTHORITY BY SARKIS ON SEPTEMBER 23. IF THIS DOES NOT MATERIALIZE IT WOULD BE AN IMPORTANT IF LARGELY SYMBOLIC STEP IN WHAT AMIN GEMAYEL DESCRIBED TO US AS PHALANGE EFFORTS TO ASSIST SARKIS.
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